

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, and 4-18 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which the Applicants regard as the invention. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As previously argued, it is believed that the body of the claims which refer to a non-woven fabric layer having a specific denier and a woven or knitted fabric layer having a specific denier clearly provides the necessary parameters for defining the expressions "low elongation" and "excellent softness." However, as the Examiner will note, claim 1 has been cancelled from the present application and claim 13 has been amended to eliminate the expressions which have been objected to by the Examiner. Also, all of the claims which were originally dependent upon claim 1 have now been amended to be dependent from claim 13. Accordingly, it is believed that this rejection has been eliminated.

Claims 1, 2, 4, 5, 9-11, 13-15 and 17-18 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 USC 103(a) as being obvious over U.S. Patent 4,145,468 to Mizoguchi et al. (hereinafter referred to as Mizoguchi). Also, claims 6-9, 12 and 16-18 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizoguchi and further in view of U.S. Patent 5,256,429 to Honda et al. (hereinafter referred to as Honda). Claims 6-9 have been rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Mizoguchi in view of U.S. Patent 6,780,469 to Iijima. Finally, claims 1, 2, and 4-18 are rejected by the Examiner under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Honda in view of Mizoguchi. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

The present invention is directed to a composite sheet which possesses excellent softness, low elongation, and form stability wherein the component sheet contains a non-woven fabric layer (1) having ultrafine fibers with a fineness of less than 0.3 denier, a woven or knitted fabric layer (2) containing a yarn made of ultrafine fibers having a fineness of 0.01 to less than 0.3 denier, and a polyurethane resin. As can be seen by referring to claim 13 of the present application, the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer 2 is further defined so as to be not more than the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the non-woven fabric

layer 1. This feature of the present invention can be found by referring to the top of page 5 of the present application. Thus, it is important that the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric of the present invention is the same or less than the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric of the present invention. Thus, as noted on page 7, line 3 to page 8, line 7, the importance of the feature of the present invention wherein the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric is not more than the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer is clearly pointed out. Thus, if the fineness of the woven or knitted fabric layer 2 is larger than the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer 1, such larger fineness may cause damage of the woven or knitted fabric due to a needle-punching operation for bonding the woven or knitted fabric 2 to the staple non-woven fabric layer 1 and the damaged fibers often come out to the surface of the artificial leather. Thus, since the fibers of the woven or knitted fabric layer which come out to the surface have a larger fineness than that of the staple fibers of the non-woven fabric layer 1, an uneven appearance of the artificial leather and a reduced softness is the result.

In the Mizoguchi prior art reference, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is 0.5 to 3 denier and the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric is 0.005 to 0.5 denier. Thus, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is only the same as the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric in the case of 0.5 denier. In all other cases, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric cannot be the same or smaller than the fineness of the non-woven fabric but in fact is always larger than the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric. Also, it should be noted that in the case where the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is the same as the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric, that is, 0.5 denier, the 0.5 denier of the Mizoguchi reference does not fall within the fineness range of 0.01 to 0.3 denier as defined by the present invention.

In the case of the Honda reference, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is more than 2 denier (please refer to the example: 76 denier/36 filament) and the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric is less than 0.8 denier (please refer to Col.

3, lines 52-56 of the Honda reference). As a result, the fineness of the yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric is always larger than the fineness of the yarn constituting the non-woven fabric.

The relevance of the Iijima reference is not understood inasmuch as the disclosure thereof is merely generic in nature and contains no relevance with respect to the relationship between the denier of the woven fabric and the denier of the non-woven fabric. In fact, none of the references relied upon by the Examiner, either alone or in combination recognize the feature of the present invention wherein the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the woven or knitted fabric 2 is not more than the fineness of the ultrafine fibers of the non-woven fabric layer I as recited in claim 13 of the present application.

The present invention defines a difference in fineness of yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric when compared to the prior art fabrics. Since the present invention defines a component sheet for artificial leather which has less fineness of yarn constituting the woven or knitted fabric when compared to the prior art, the properties of the composite sheet of the present invention are clearly different from that of the prior art. Since the stitching strength, elongation and stiffness depends upon the fineness of the yarn which constitutes the woven or knitted fabric, such properties cannot be found in any of the references relied upon by the Examiner, either alone or in combination.

Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all of the claims of the application are respectfully requested. In the event the proposed Amendment does not place the present application into condition for allowance, entry thereof is respectfully requested as placing the present application into better condition for appeal.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Joseph A. Kolasch Reg. No. 22,463 at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

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If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§1.16 or 1.14; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

By 

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